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Dodd and the Test Ban

An astonishing assumption that two successive Administrations would deliberately "imperil the security of the United States" underlies Sen. Thomas J. Dodd's attack upon the test-ban treaty and his announced opposition to it. He charged in the Senate speech he made yesterday that the adoption of the treaty would jeopardize the country because it would preclude further development on the neutron bomb and on antimissile missiles.

Another assumption in the Senator's address is that any change in the United States position during negotiations is a concession and a retreat. The United States has changed its positions many times during these negotiations. The changes have not been in the same direction. Many of them have been in response to better scientific information than that available in the first instance. Our position on the detection of underground tests became more unacceptable to the Soviet Union when research indicated the possibility of concealing small-caliber explosions by decoupling devices. Our position on inspection moved the other way as technical know-how needed to discriminate between natural and artificial earth tremors has improved. All revisions are not necessarily concessions.

Any test-ban treaty that reaches the Senate is not likely to preclude further scientific progress toward antimissile missiles or the neutron bomb. At the moment, the antimissile missile is not being held up by any inhibition on thermonuclear testing. The need to test is not likely to arise for some time in the neutron bomb development. There are no proposals for a treaty banning inquiry, research and development.

Senator Dodd, like many other critics of a test ban, seems to believe any treaty will advantage the Soviet Union. As McGeorge Bundy pointed out in the Yale address of Feb. 16: "the effort for the control and limitation of nuclear weaponry is exactly as much a part of our national security and an element in our national defense as our arrangements for an effective nuclear deterrent. It is simply not true as some seem to believe, that any arms agreement must be a disadvantage to one side or the other."

There always is the risk, as Senator Dodd and others point out, that the Soviet Union will some day renounce a treaty and resume testing. This risk, as Mr. Bundy said at Yale, is, in the judgment of both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy, "substantially outweighed" by other considerations. Notwithstanding all the difficulties and dangers, "both Administrations have believed that the basic deterrent strength of the United States can be maintained if testing is stopped on both sides, and that the disadvantages we might suffer from a sudden resumption, while real, are far from decisive."

The object of the test-ban negotiations is to obtain a treaty that will reduce the dangers inherent in the thermonuclear tests themselves and the risks resulting from the impetus they give to the competition in the development of thermonuclear weapons. It is not likely that this or any other Administration will lay before the Senate a treaty that, in Senator Dodd's words, "would gravely imperil the security of the United States."